

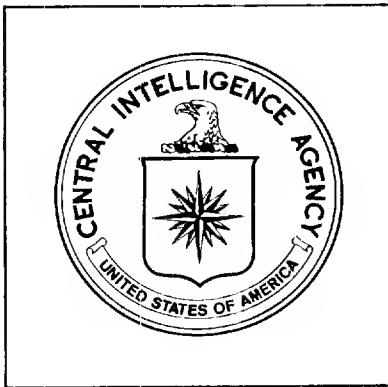
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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Relations with Portugal

Portuguese Foreign Minister Soares' recent visit to the USSR is another indication of Moscow's interest in establishing closer ties to Portugal. It was the first visit by a high-level Portuguese official since Communist leader Cunhal made a ministerial visit to Moscow in October--and the first time a Portuguese foreign minister had visited there since the Bolshevik revolution. Gromyko accepted an invitation for a reciprocal trip to Portugal, but no date was set.

At a dinner for the visiting foreign minister, Gromyko said the Soviets wanted to expand and strengthen bilateral relations, and, predictably, praised Portuguese decolonization in Africa. In a statement released at the end of the visit, the Portuguese endorsed the Soviet call for an early end to the European Security Conference and for holding its concluding stage at the summit level. Nothing was said publicly on sensitive subjects such as Portugal's domestic politics, its role in NATO, or the US base in the Azores.

Although no new undertakings were announced during the Soares soiree, several bilateral agreements had been reached before the trip. A trade agreement concluded on December 19 included most-favored-nation status for each country and provided for the establishment of reciprocal trade missions in Moscow and Lisbon. A shipping agreement signed December 20 stressed the development of direct shipping links and increasing shipments in one another's carriers. An air agreement of December 11 had provided for direct flights between the two countries.

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These agreements are similar to those that the Soviets have with many other Western countries. They indicate that while Moscow wants to improve relations with Portugal, it is moving cautiously to avoid arousing suspicions in other Western nations or among anti-Communist domestic forces. The Soviets have stopped well short of making an explicit or implicit commitment in the agreement to the present Lisbon government or to giving it any significant economic assistance. Economic aid was raised by Cunhal in October without eliciting a positive Soviet response, and the evidence suggests that Soares did not make any great headway if indeed he raised the issue at all. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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